



**The Curse of the Law and the Crisis in Galatia:
Reassessing the Purpose of Galatians
(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen
Testament-2.Reihe)**

Todd A Wilson

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Todd Wilson examines the rationale for Paul's four references to the Law in 5:13-6:10 in light of a fresh appraisal of the Galatian crisis. He contributes to the continuing debate over the relevance of this section of the letter for the rest of Galatians and for the situation in Galatia. In addition, his study offers a refined understanding of how Galatians functioned in its original setting: he argues that with the letter Paul confronts his apostatising converts with the stark choice between blessing and curse.

The author's thesis is that Paul intended his four references to the Law in 5:13-6:10, not as a way of underscoring the superfluity of the Law for Christian living, but as an affirmation of the sufficiency of the Spirit to enable the Galatians to fulfil the Law and thereby avoid the Law's curse. Several notable conclusions are reached. First, the curse of the Law is important not only earlier in the letter (3:10-14; 3:23-29; 4:1-7; 4:21-31), but it also continues to be a central concern for Paul in 5:13-6:10.

Secondly, for Paul redemption from the curse of the Law is not a fait accompli: the cursing voice of the Law will only be silenced if the Galatians walk by the Spirit and resist the 'desire of the flesh' (5:16-18). Thirdly, in Galatians Paul places less emphasis upon the superfluity of the Law than is often assumed; rather, he focuses upon the Law's inability to mediate righteousness (2:15-21; 3:21; 5:5-6), its contrast with 'faith' (3:11-12), and its power to curse (1:8-9; 3:10, 13). This observation, in turn, may have far-reaching implications for the question of Christian supersessionism: the idea that the church has displaced the Jews as the elect people of God.

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